

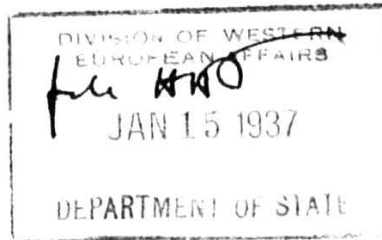


EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, December 29, 1936.

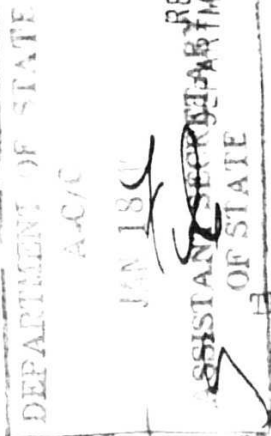
No. 138

Subject: Anti-Semitic Measures in Tripoli.



DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS

1937 JAN 14 PM 3 11



The Honorable

The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

With reference to confidential despatch No. 27 of December 11, 1936 from the Vice Consul at Tripoli to this Embassy, a copy of which was transmitted to the Department, regarding the punishment of Jews for refusing to open their shops in Tripoli on Saturdays, I have the honor to report that an article published in IL SOLE, Milan, on December 26th criticizes foreign news agencies for publishing "false reports concerning the insurrection of Tripoli Jews, mass arrests, persecutions, etc." but admits that there was "some resistance on the part of some of the less disciplined elements on the first Saturday following the publication of the decree" requiring shops to be opened. IL SOLE adds that "against these

elements

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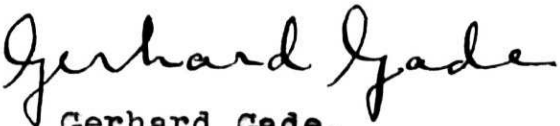
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elements efficacious disciplinary measures were taken,
so that the next Saturday passed with no trouble at all."

An English translation of the aforesaid article
from IL SOLE is enclosed for the Department's information.

Respectfully yours,

For the Ambassador:


Gerhard Gade,
Second Secretary of Embassy.

✓
Enclosure:

Translation of
article from IL SOLE.

GG/wrm

840.1

(IL SOLE of December 26-27, 1936)

Translation

OPENING OF SHOPS IN TRIPOLI

FALSE FOREIGN REPORTS DENIED.

ROME, 26. Certain foreign news agencies have published false reports regarding the decree of the Provincial Commissary of Tripoli, issued on November 15th last, ordering that from December 1st proprietors of Jewish shops situated in the new city (traditions will be respected for everyone with regard to the old city), must see that the said shops remain open on Saturdays in order to avoid that look of squalor and abandonment which existed as soon as the shops were closed.

The Azione Coloniale under the heading "The Old Story" writes in this connection:

"With that bad faith which not infrequently inspires some foreign agencies, certain agencies have published alarming reports concerning the insurrection of Tripoli Jews, mass arrests, persecutions, etc. Naturally conditions are quite different. It was only a question of some resistance on the part of some of the less disciplined elements on the first Saturday following the publication of the decree. Against these elements efficacious disciplinary measures were taken, so that the next Saturday passed in the most normal way with no trouble at all.

"In conclusion we wish to point out how the Government itself is interested in meeting the religious exigencies of the persons in question by providing that shops may postpone their hour of opening up to

ten o'clock with a view to permitting the personnel to fulfil their usual religious duties, and by ensuring all possible facilities to Jewish shopkeepers who wish to replace their co-religionist personnel with personnel of another religion.

"There is therefore no truth in the insinuations of those foreign organs of bad faith. It's the same old story."

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

865c.00/91

SEE ~~865c.00/91~~ FOR ~~628~~

FROM Italy (Phillips) DATED Nov. 3, 1937
TO NAME 1-1127 epe

(Enclosing report of October 8, 1937 from Mr. Jay Walker, Cairo.)

REGARDING: Jewish problem -- Libya.
Reports the -- since December 1936.

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Jewish Problem.

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J. G. G. G. G.
The arrest and imprisonment at Tripoli, on December 7, 1936, of some one hundred and sixty-five Jewish store owners followed by a public flogging of two of those arrested showed that a wide breach had developed between the Fascist officials and the Jewish population. The direct cause of the mass arrest was the failure of the Jews with stores outside the old city wall at Tripoli to keep their places of business open after ten A.M. on Saturdays, in compliance with a Government order issued several weeks previously. As legal reasons for opposing the Government order, the Jews said that it interfered with their religious freedom by compelling them to do business on their Sabbath and was ~~contrary~~ to the declaration of General Caneva's at Tripoli in 1911, when the Italians first occupied the colony.

Official census statistics indicate that there are about 26,000 native Jews living in Libya. In addition to this number, a few Italian born Jews have emigrated to the colony. The Jewish community in Libya, as in other parts of North Africa, is comparatively wealthy and extremely active in commercial affairs -- especially

is this so in the cities of Tripoli and Bengasi. A very large percentage are completely Europeanized.

To the observer, it seems apparent that the Libyan Jews have been quick to take advantage of the enormous sums of money the Italians have spent in the colony since the occupation, and they must now be recognized as the one class successful in acquiring and retaining wealth. The thrift and Oriental bargaining methods of the Jew make him a serious competitor for the Italian colonist and business man.

The commercial life of the colony undoubtedly became more difficult as a result of trade restrictions and increased taxes imposed during and immediately following the Italo-Ethiopian conflict. The Jewish community naturally resented the obstacles placed in the way of normal business conditions and the losses they sustained when practically all the staple commodities imported and consumed in the colony were handled under direct state control by specially authorized permits distributed principally to members of the Party. Very few of the Jews in Libya are Fascist members.

According to the series of anti-Semitic articles which appeared in the Tripoli newspaper at the time the situation was most critical, the Italian official class feels that the Jews have not loyally supported them, and have failed to accept the modern spirit of Fascism, which calls for both personal and financial sacrifices from everyone. The impression given to the observer was that the Italian shopkeeper class sympathized, in some ways, with the Jews -- they also having found great difficulties

in carrying on business under increasing government restrictions.

After the Governor General had withdrawn the business licenses and thereby closed some twenty-six stores, the Jews were understood to have appealed their case to Rome on the basis that Marshal Balbo's order, forcing them to keep their shops open on Saturdays interfered with their religious freedom. Apparently, their appeal was unsuccessful. The matter was fully reported in the foreign press and shortly thereafter, a few of the Jewish merchants were permitted to reopen their shops.

At the time the writer left the colony, the Government had continued forcing the Jews to keep their shops open on Saturday under threat of losing their licenses. The Jews were retaliating by a quiet campaign of passive resistance, which had a decided tendency to further complicate unfavorably the business life of the colony.

Conclusions.

It is apparent that the development of Libya has been financed almost entirely by government funds, and that the colony is essentially a Government creation. Of the 46,000 Italian civilians living there, about ninety per cent. are either directly employed by the Government or dependent on government-financed agencies to earn their livelihood.

Nearly all the Italian civilian residents are those carefully selected in Italy by the Fascist Regime on a basis of Party affiliations. This policy permits the officials to carry out their announced intentions to make Libya a model "Fascist colony" to the exclusion of all others.

others.

Close observers agree that Libya has not fulfilled expectations as a colonial outlet for Italy's surplus population. The number of armed forces maintained there would seem to indicate that it has assumed importance instead as a strategical base in the defense of Italian lines of communication to East Africa as well as a possible point for operations against the colonies and possessions of other States in the Mediterranean area.

Note.

Observations noted in this report were made throughout the writer's assignment at Tripoli between December 18, 1935, and April 7, 1937, during which time he traveled approximately 5,946 miles within the territorial limits of the colony.

Central File: Decimal File 865C.4016, Internal Affairs Of States, Social Matters., People., Libya, Race Problems. Racial Disturbances, Their Suppression. Massacres. Pogroms., December 29, 1936 - November 3, 1937. December 29, 1936 - November 3, 1937. MS European Colonialism in the Early 20th Century. National Archives (United States). Archives Unbound, link.gale.com%2Fapps%2Fdoc%2FSC5109726388%2FGDSC%3Fu%3Domni%26sid%3Dbookmark-GDSC. Accessed 18 June 2025.